

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 PM-04 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00
INR-07 NSAE-00 DHA-02 ACDA-07 MC-02 IGA-02 TRSE-00
L-03 H-01 OMB-01 EB-07 COME-00 PRS-01 AID-05
DODE-00 SNM-02 IO-13 /094 W
-----023074 121903Z /40

R 121540Z JUL 77

FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 2552

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BOGOTA 6422

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: MASS, CO

SUBJECT: ASSESSMENT OF US SECURITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM

REF: A) STATE 133136; B) BOGOTA 3420; C) MILGP 221200Z MAR 77
D) 76 BOGOTA 10303; E) 76 BOGOTA 4988

1. CONSIDERATIONS IN BOGOTA REFEELS REGARDING USINTERESTS IN MAINTAINING MILITARY ASSISTANCE TO COLOMBIA REMAIN VALID. THE COUNTRY AND ITS ARMED FORCES HAVE MAINTAINED A POSTURE OF HIGH REGARD FOR BASIC HUMAN RIGHTS AND CIVILIAN CONTROL OF THE MILITARY WHILE PRESERVING THE NATION'S DEMOCRATIC SYSTEM. WE SHOULD NOT UNDERESTIMATE THE CONTRIBUTION WHICH THE US SECURITY ASSISTANCE EFFORT HAS MADE TO THIS CONDITION. NEITHER SHOULD WE CONCLUDE THAT THIS CONDITION IS IRREVERSIBLE. THE GOC AND ITS ARMED FORCES HAVE BEEN ABLE TO FOSTER AND PRESERVE THIS FUNCTIONING DEMOCRACY IN AN ENVIRONMENT OF DOMESTIC DISORDER, IN LARGE PART BECAUSE THE US GOVERNMENT HAS BEEN ABLE TO PROVIDE ESSENTIAL MATERIAL ASSISTANCE AND ADVICE TO A DEFENSIVELY ORIENTED ARMED FORCES WHILE EXERCISING SUBSTANTIAL INFLUENCE UPON THE LEADERSHIP OF THE COLOMBIAN MILITARY.

2. THE SPECIFIC OBJECTIVES OF THE US SECURITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM IN COLOMBIA SHOULD BE TO CONTINUE THE CURRENT MODEST
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EFFORT TOWARDS REASONABLE MODERNIZATION OF HER ARMED FORCES. THIS SERVES US NATIONAL INTERESTS IN AT LEAST FOUR WAYS:
A. IT ASSISTS IN STRENGTHENING COLOMBIA'S DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS, THREATENED PRIMARILY BY LEFTIST GUERRILLAS, TERRORISTS AND CRIMINAL GROUPS, INCLUDING THOSE INSTITUTIONS EMPLOYED AGAINST ILLICIT DRUG TRAFFICKING AND THOSE PROTECTIVE OF HUMAN RIGHTS.

B. IT PERMITS THE US TO MAINTAIN THE ONLY SIGNIFICANT EXTERNAL INFLUENCE WITHIN THE COLOMBIAN MILITARY. IN A COUNTRY WHICH BORDERS ON PANAMA AND HAS AN ECONOMIC INTEREST IN THE CONTINUED EFFICIENT OPERATION OF THE CANAL, THIS INFLUENCE MAY BE USEFUL IN FUTURE US RELATIONS WITH PANAMA AND IN THE OPERATION OF THE CANAL.

C. IT HELPS TO MAINTAIN AN EFFECTIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH AN INFLUENTIAL SECTOR OF COLOMBIAN SOCIETY WHICH CAN CONTRIBUTE TO THE GOC'S CAPACITY AND WILLINGNESS TO SERVE AS A MODERATE THIRD WORLD NATION SUSCEPTIBLE TO US REASONING AND CAPABLE OF ASSISTING THE US IN PROMOTING ITS POLICIES TOWARD OTHER

THIRD WORLD COUNTRIES.

D. IT CONTRIBUTES TO THE STRENGTHENING OF AN INSTITUTION WHICH IS A BASIC GOVERNMENTAL INSTRUMENT FOR GUARANTEEING THE MAINTENANCE OF THE ORDER NECESSARY FOR THE CONTINUATION OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNMENT AND THE TRANSACTION OF ECONOMIC ACTIVITIES, INCLUDING THOSE OF IMPORTANCE TO THE U.S.

3. PRESENT AND FUTURE THREATS TO GOC ARE PRIMARILY DOMESTIC. THE GOC CONTINUES TO COMBAT POLITICALLY MOTIVATED ARMED LEFTIST INSURGENTS AND CRIMINAL ELEMENTS WHICH THREATEN ITS DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS. THE GOC'S RESPONSE TO THESE THREATS EMPHASIZES ECONOMIC AND POLITICAL REFORMS BUT ALSO INCLUDES DEFENSIVE MILITARY ACTION. THE EMBASSY IS IN BASIC AGREEMENT WITH THIS STRATEGY WHICH, SO FAR, HAS CONTAINED CONFIDENTIAL

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BUT NOT ELIMINATED THE PROBLEM. WE SEE NO VIABLE ALTERNATIVE TO THIS STRATEGY.

4. INTERNATIONALLY, THE PRESENT ADMINISTRATION HAS CONTINUED TO SEEK THE PEACEFUL DEFINITION OF COLOMBIA'S BORDERS. RELATIONS WITH NEIGHBORING STATES ARE GOOD. COLOMBIA'S MAJOR INTERNATIONAL DISPUTE INVOLVES CONFLICTING CLAIMS OF SOVERIGNTY WITH VENEZUELA OVER A MARITIME AREA CONTIGUOUS TO THE GULF OF VENEZUELA. THE TWO GOVERNMENTS ARE WORKING TOWARD A PEACEFUL SOLUTION, HOWEVER, AND ANY MILITARY ACTION IS HIGHLY IMPROBABLE. MOST OF COLOMBIA'S NEIGHBORS, ESPECIALLY BRAZIL, VENEZUELA AND PERU, SEEM TO POSSESS GREATER MILITARY CAPABILITIES. HOWEVER, EVEN WITH A CHANGE IN THEIR GOVERNMENT'S ATTITUDES THERE WOULD BE NO FORSEEABLE REASON TO CONSIDER THEM TO BE IMMEDIATE THREATS TO COLOMBIA.

5. COLOMBIA'S SMALL DEFENSIVE MILITARY ESTABLISHMENT WHICH CLAIMS ONLY A MODEST PORTION OF THE NATIONAL BUDGET IS BEST SUITED FOR THE COUNTRY'S NEEDS AND, IN ACCORDANCE WITH US INTERESTS, WARRANTS SUPPORT.

6. THE GOC HAS NOT FORMULATED A LONG RANGE

DEFENSE ACQUISITION PROGRAM WHICH WOULD PERMIT PRECISE IDENTIFICATION OF ARTICLES AND SERVICES WHICH THEY MAY SEEK FROM THE US IN FY

79. HOWEVER, ALL CURRENT PLANS

EMPHASIZE THE INTENT OF DEVELOPING A MODEST AND MODERNIZED DEFENSIVE FORCE WHICH WILL ENSURE THE INTEGRITY OF ITS NATIONAL FRONTIERS AND THE MAINTENANCE OF DOMESTIC PEACE. TO DATE, THERE HAVE BEEN NO SERIOUS EFFORTS TO ACQUIRE ADVANCED OR UNNECESSARY, COSTLY PROGRAMS OR EQUIPMENT.

7. BASED ON ANTICIPATED FMS CREDITS THRU FY 79, COLOMBIA SHOULD BE ABLE TO ARRANGE MATERIAL ACQUISITION AND DEBT SERVICE WITHOUT SIGNIFICANT ECONOMIC PROBLEMS.

8. THE FORESEEABLE LEVEL AND SCOPE OF THE SECURITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
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GRAM SHOULD NOT RESULT IN ANY SUBSTANTIAL INFLUX OF USG OR CIVILIAN CONTRACT PERSONNEL IN-COUNTRY.

9. COLOMBIAN MILITARY EQUIPMENT IS OVERWHELMINGLY US ORIENTED. MILITARY OFFICERS HERE SHOW A CLEAR PREFERENCE FOR US MATERIAL AND TRAINING. HOWEVER, IF US ASSISTANCE IS ELIMINATED, THE COLOMBIANS, WITH THEIR LIMITED MILITARY BUDGET, WILL BE FORCED TO TURN TO MORE ATTRACTIVE OFFERS FROM THIRD COUNTRIES. IN THE PAST, OTHER NATIONS, INCLUDING THE SOVIET UNION, HAVE MADE STRONG EFFORTS TO PENETRATE THIS MARKET IN ORDER TO GAIN INFLUENCE WITH THE COLOMBIAN MILITARY. AS NOTED IN REF(E), "THE COLOMBIAN ARMED FORCES HAVE ON SEVERAL SPECIFIC OCCASIONS GONE OUT ON A LIMB IN TURNING TO US RATHER THAN TO MORE EAGER THIRD COUNTRY SUPPLIERS, ESPECIALLY THE SOVIETS. IF WE CANNOT BE RESPONSIVE TO THESE SPECIFIC AND CONCRETE REQUESTS FOR ASSISTANCE, THE ADVERSE CONSEQUENCES WILL BE FAR MORE FAR-REACHING AND POLITICAL THAN MERELY A QUESTION OF CREDIT AND AID LEVELS". THIS CAVEAT REMAINS VALID.

10. EACH MAJOR ANTICIPATED SALE OR TRANSFER IS CONSISTENT WITH THE PRESIDENT'S ARMS CONTROL POLICY. THE COLOMBIAN MILITARY IS SEEKING BASICALLY DEFENSIVE EQUIPMENT TO MODERNIZE ITS FORCES. IT NEITHER SEEKS NOR COULD EFFECTIVELY MANAGE, FINANCIALLY OR TECHNICALLY, HIGHLY SOPHISTICATED EQUIPMENT, ESPECIALLY ANY NOT ALREADY INTRODUCED INTO THE AREA. FROM INFORMATION AVAILABLE, WE BELIEVE THAT COLOMBIA'S MILITARY IS INFERIOR, AT LEAST IN EQUIPMENT, TO THE ARMED FORCES IN NEIGHBORING COUNTRIES.

11. COLOMBIA'S HUMAN RIGHTS RECORD IS EXEMPLARY. POSITIVE ACTION, AS RECOMMENDED RECENTLY BY SEVERAL US OFFICIALS INCLUDING ASSISTANT SECRETARY TODMAN, WOULD HAVE THE MOST BENEFICIAL EFFECT ON HUMAN RIGHTS HERE. A DENIAL OF SECURITY
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ASSISTANCE REQUESTS BY COLOMBIA WOULD SEEM TO ASSIGN TO IT THE SAME TREATMENT GIVEN TO NATIONS WHICH CONSISTENTLY VIOLATE HUMAN RIGHTS, HARDLY AN ENCOURAGEMENT FOR EITHER TYPE OF COUNTRY.

12. AS NOTED ABOVE, COLOMBIA SEEKS BASICALLY DEFENSIVE

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ACTION PM-04

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 ISO-00 NSC-05 SP-02 SS-15 CIAE-00
INR-07 NSAE-00 DHA-02 ACDA-07 MC-02 IGA-02 TRSE-00
L-03 H-01 OMB-01 EB-07 COME-00 PRS-01 AID-05
DODE-00 SNM-02 IO-13 /090 W
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 2 OF 2 BOGOTA 6422

EQUIPMENT OF A RELATIVELY UNSOPHISTICATED NATURE. THE GOC, CONCERNED ABOUT EXCESSIVE MILITARY SPENDING IN GENERAL, HAS LIMITED ITS MWN MILITARY BUDGET AND WOULD PROBABLY SUPPORT A US ARMS RESTRAINT POLICY WHICH TOOK INTO ACCOUNT COLOMBIA'S DEFENSIVE NEEDS.

13. IMET TRAINING SHOULD BE AIMED PRIMARILY AT THE PROFESSIONAL LEVEL WITH EMPHASIS ON TRAINING AND EXPOSING TO US INFLUENCE, JUNIOR OFFICERS AND THOSE OCCUPYING THE MID-RANGE POSITIONS (ARMY AND AF MAJOR/LTC, NAVY LT CDRS, CDRS). COLOMBIA WOULD PROBABLY PAY FOR EQUIPMENT-RELATED TRAINING WHICH IT CONSIDERED CRITICAL EVEN IF NOT AVAILABLE ON A GRANT BASIS. IT HAS ALREADY DEMONSTRATED A WILLINGNESS TO PAY TLA COSTS TO MAXIMIZE TRAINING AVAILABLE UNDER IMET.

14. CHARGE'S SUMMARY COMMENTS: COLOMBIA REPRESENTS THE ALMOST UNIQUE EXAMPLE, IN THIS PART OF THE WORLD, OF A COUNTRY

ASSESSING FUNCTIONING DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTIONS, RESPECT FOR
HUMAN RIGHTS, AND WHICH IS FRUGAL IN ITS ALLOTMENT OF
RESOURCES TO ITS ARMED FORCES, PREFERRING TO DEVOTE SUCH
RESOURCES TO MUCH NEEDED ECONOMIC AND SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT.
US INTERESTS SERVED BY A SECURITY ASSISTANCE RELATIONSHIP
WITH COLOMBIA INCLUDE: (A) MAINTAINING THIS DEMOCRATIC
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SOCIETY'S CAPABILITY TO DEFEND ITSELF AND TO ENSURE SOCIAL
PEACE; (B) PRESERVING US INFLUENCE AND A CONSTRUCTIVE
RELATIONSHIP WITH THE COLOMBIAN MILITARY, AN INFLUENTIAL
SECTOR OF COLOMBIAN SOCIETY; (C) FORECLOSING THE
POSSIBILITY OF THE ARRIVAL ON THE SCENE OF A POSSIBLY
HOSTILE THIRD COUNTRY SUPPLIER; (THE SOVIETS HAVE SHOWN
THEMSELVES TO BE EAGER TO PENETRATE THIS MARKET AND HAVE
OFFERED ATTRACTIVE TERMS. COLOMBIA'S PROXIMITY TO THE
PANAMA CANAL WOULD MAKE THIS A DEVELOPMENT TO BE AVOIDED).
(D) DEMONSTRATING THAT THE NEW IMPORTANCE WHICH THE US
ATTRIBUTES TO DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS IS NOT ONLY
EXERCISED IN A PUNITIVE SENSE AGAINST DICTATORSHIPS WHICH
ARE INSENSITIVE TO HUMAN RIGHTS BUT CAN ALSO BE OF POSITIVE
VALUE TO DEMOCRACIES WHICH ARE RESPECTFUL OF HUMAN RIGHTS.
I STRONGLY RECOMMEND THAT OUR SECURITY ASSISTANCE RELATIONSHIP
WITH COLOMBIA BE CONTINUED AT THE RELATIVELY MODEST LEVEL
PRESENTLY ENVISAGED, AS BEING FULLY SUPPORTIVE OF US INTERESTS.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01-Jan-1994 12:00:00 am
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: SECURITY, PROGRAM ASSISTANCE, INTELLIGENCE ASSESSMENTS
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Copy: SINGLE
Sent Date: 12-Jul-1977 12:00:00 am
Decaption Date: 01-Jan-1960 12:00:00 am
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 22 May 2009
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1977BOGOTA06422
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D770247-1113
Format: TEL
From: BOGOTA
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Office: ACTION ARA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 5
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 77 STATE 133136, 77 BOGOTA 3420
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 18-Apr-2005 12:00:00 am
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 1894852
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: ASSESSMENT OF US SECURITY ASSISTANCE PROGRAM
TAGS: MASS, PINR, CO
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvwkey: odb://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/5fb5676d-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
22 May 2009
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 22 May 2009